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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003331

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PK, AF, CH

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: CONSULTATIONS REVEAL  
COMMON U.S.-CHINA INTERESTS

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Ben Moeling. Reasons  
1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) An eight-member U.S. delegation held bilateral consultations in Beijing November 12 on potential areas for future collaboration with China in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Throughout the consultations, the U.S. delegation stressed the many areas of aligned strategic interests of the United States and the PRC in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and sought to identify tangible, low-profile, but high-impact ways to coordinate in the future, frequently bringing the conversation from a general level to specific areas of potential cooperation. For the most part, MFA representatives delivered standard talking points about common interests and Chinese concerns about non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful co-existence with neighbors.

By holding the working-level talks before the President's November trip to Beijing, however, the U.S. delegation succeeded in establishing the importance of cooperation in Afghanistan and Pakistan to our bilateral agenda. While the Chinese made clear that this forum was held at the U.S. behest, they also stated repeatedly that they appreciated ongoing regular consultations.

12. (C) While meaningful cooperation with the United States in the short term likely will remain limited, the Chinese were willing to discuss specific proposals in ongoing consultations. They welcomed a constructive U.S. role supporting stability and development in the region. In particular, they expressed appreciation of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, though notably they made little mention of U.S. efforts in Pakistan. They emphasized America's "great responsibility" in the region, but appreciated hearing that the United States does not intend a permanent military presence. They stressed an overarching goal of regional stability based on (1) Afghan stabilization and reconstruction; (2) support for Pakistani stability; (3) India-Pakistan dialogue and peace; and (4) fighting the symptoms and root causes of terrorism. For both Afghanistan and Pakistan, the PRC interlocutors emphasized that as a "developing country," China provides assistance "to the best of our ability."

13. (C) The consultations covered four main areas of civilian support: (1) assistance focused on health, education, etc.; (2) improving well-being (with hospitals, irrigation projects, etc); (3) building human capacity (training of diplomats, professionals, etc.); and (4) encouraging investment by Chinese companies (e.g., the Aynak copper mine). In all of these areas, PRC interlocutors offered few details about their activities. They made it clear that they were sympathetic to Pakistan's concerns about being lumped

with Afghanistan, had no plans to appoint a Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and will not likely join the Friends of Democratic Pakistan (though the PRC will continue to participate in meetings). China prefers to conduct its relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan bilaterally.

¶4. (C) In closing the consultation, the U.S. delegation again sought to establish concrete ways to continue to explore further collaboration. The Chinese said that, as a whole, China welcomed the U.S. ideas, appreciated having these ideas on the table for examination, and expressed interest in follow-up discussions, while also noting their intent to pursue bilateral plans. Among the ideas for future follow-up were:

--Working on an agreed document for laying out a way forward on Af/Pak consultations and possible areas of collaboration.

--A U.S.-China Development Discussion, to be held either in Kabul or in Washington DC and to cover: (1) information-sharing and training on counter-narcotics; (2) cooperation on expanding regional agricultural capacity, including on crop substitution, or founding an agricultural demonstration center; (3) possible Chinese infrastructure projects in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including a railroad extension, an East-West road, and a dam; and (4) joint educational and health initiatives, including potentially in training programs for skills that will ultimately benefit Chinese interests (e.g., engineers, skilled laborers).

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--A meeting between PRC energy experts and State Department Coordinator for International Energy Affairs David Goldwyn and others from the State Department to exchange information on Pakistan's energy needs, which could potentially be expanded to also discuss other areas of mutual interest, including education and training needs in Pakistan, and counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism initiatives.

¶5. (U) The delegation cleared this cable.  
GOLDBERG